

Fig. 16. illustrates an exemplary shopping cart web page associated with a vendor type X.

Fig. 17 illustrates an exemplary merchant input.

Fig. 18 is a flow chart of the steps taken by a vendor to become e-commerce enabled.

Fig. 19 is a flow chart of the steps taken by an operator of the Multi-Vendor Internet Commerce System.”

In the Claims:

1. A multi-vendor internet commerce system (MV-ICS) for efficiently enabling e-commerce through the Internet for a plurality of vendors having vendor-sites and a plurality of consumers being in contact with the vendor-sites, the system comprising:

a centrally implemented multi-vendor central processing unit (MV-CPU) that acts as a shared processing location for the plurality of vendors;

a centrally implemented multi-vendor shared datastore (MV-SD) that acts cooperatively with the MV-CPU and serves as a shared datastore for the plurality of vendors;

at least one vendor-site I/O module that is used by at least one of the plurality of vendors to interface with the MV-CPU and MV-SD;

at least one consumer-interface I/O module that is used by at least one consumer to interface with the MV-CPU and MV-SD,

wherein the MV-SD relieves individual vendor websites from the burden of setting up and maintaining at least a portion of certain facilities contained on the MV-SD, and the MV-CPU ensures that appropriate communication occurs between each vendor website and the MV-SD.

2. The multi-vendor Internet commerce system of Claim 1, wherein implementation of certain facilities and other shared resources on the MV-SD is substantially transparent to the consumer contacting the MV-ICS.

3. The multi-vendor Internet commerce system of Claim 1, wherein vendors who are otherwise unrelated or unknown to each other share the Internet commerce system.

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4. (Cancelled)

5. (Cancelled)

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6. The multi-vendor Internet commerce system of Claim 1, wherein the MV-SD includes at least a consumer database, which tracks consumer profiles on behalf of the plurality of participating vendor websites.

7. The multi-vendor Internet commerce system of Claim 6, wherein the consumer profile includes a universal, cross-vendor shopping cart into which items selected from a plurality of vendors may be deposited.

8. The multi-vendor Internet commerce system of Claim 1, wherein the MV-SD includes at least a vendor database, which tracks the participating vendor profiles and their websites.

9. The multi-vendor Internet commerce system of Claim 1, wherein MV-SD includes at least a product database representing a database of products offered for sale by the participating vendors.

10. The multi-vendor Internet commerce system of Claim 9, wherein the product database includes catalog representations of the products offered for sale.

11. (Once Amended) The multi-vendor Internet commerce system of Claim 1, wherein the MV-CPU includes gift registry logic for receiving items from various websites that have been selected by the consumers to be searchably placed into various gift registries.

12. The multi-vendor Internet commerce system of Claim 1, wherein the MV-CPU includes shopping cart logic for receiving items from various websites that have been selected by the consumers to be placed into the universal shopping cart for viewing, adding, removing, or purchasing that item.

13. (Once Amended) The multi-vendor Internet commerce system of Claim 1, wherein the MV-CPU includes sign-in logic for presenting an authentication page to the consumer and performing the authentication of known users or registration of new users.

14. The multi-vendor Internet commerce system of Claim 1, wherein the MV-CPU includes conveyance logic for communicating the information to each vendor about the items purchased from the vendor including at least the amount of the purchase and any shipping information.

15. (Cancelled)

16. (Cancelled)

17 (Cancelled)

18. (Cancelled)

19. (New) The multi-vendor Internet commerce system of claim 6, wherein the consumer database and MV-CPU provides the consumer a single payment process to purchase a plurality of items from a plurality of the plurality of vendors.

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20. (New) The multi-vendor Internet commerce system of claim 19, wherein the single payment process is a single checkout process.

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21. (New) The multi-vendor Internet commerce system of claim 6, wherein a consumer credit card number is stored in the consumer database, wherein the stored consumer credit card number allows purchases from the plurality of vendors.

22. (New) The multi-vendor Internet commerce system of claim 1, wherein the MV-CPU is able to charge consumers directly and notify the plurality of vendors of purchases.

23. (New) The multi-vendor Internet commerce system of claim 1, wherein the MV-CPU obtains payment and shipping data from the consumers and forwards the data to the plurality of vendors.

24. (New) The multi-vendor Internet commerce system of claim 1, wherein the MV-SD contains tax tables, discount schedules, and shipping costs from the plurality of vendors

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25 (New) The multi-vendor Internet commerce system of claim 1, wherein the MV-CPU forwards consumer shipping data to the plurality of vendors.

26. (New) The multi-vendor Internet commerce system of claim 1, wherein the MV-CPU forwards consumer credit card information to the plurality of vendors, wherein the vendors charge the consumers.
